May 4, 1967

Mr. Charles Roberts
Newsweek
1750 Penna. Ave., nw
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Roberts,

Your failure to acknowledge my repeated challenges to debate your book is as proper an exercise of your rights as your fear to debate it with someone who really knows the official account of the assassination. At first I wondered about this, for you had appeared with Louis Nizer on a radio show. Of course, that show was carefully rigged in advance, in your favor. Then I realized it perhaps was not so much your presence with a (since silent) champion and the fact that the show had been rigged as much as that no one knew anything about your book. You did not have to reveal it, although in the few words you spoke you could not help revealing your ignorance of the subject. It was then safe for you to restrict yourself to insult, misrepresentation and appeals for a return to McCarthyism. But these are rights you do have, and for responsible people to hope to enjoy the same rights, they must concede, as I do, that these you exercise are proper rights.

You are also prudent, for why should you risk exposure of your profound ignorance of that of which you write when you need not? Why should you risk public revelation of the role of literary lickspittle that you assumed when you have a pliant and compliant press to retail your untruths, half-truths, outright lies and slanders, and when you have an electronic press whose license is of federal origin and lives in fear of federal anger, as an executive of one important unit on which you appeared told me?

You do not diminish your usefulness to your employer when, as its White House representative, you assume this role and perform this dubious function, nor do you thereby become unattractive to your news sources. All of these things I can understand. I therefore have been publicly silent and have not in public and by the same means exposed you - as I might had you been a man and accepted my challenges.

However, it has become increasingly clear to me that the tremendueus campaign behind your literary finkery can hardly be justified by the publisher's expected profit from the fraction he retains from the sale of a book retailing at but one dollar. I also know the extent of your publisher's courage and dedication to freedom of the press on a controversial national issue. I know that your book is without literary or historical merit and is but a political ax-job, as I know that the only other reporter to cast himself as you have is also a White House reporter, as shy about public debate on his work, in writing as in speaking. Thus I am perplexed that a man in your position would so risk his reputation and that you have this enormous financial backing seemingly unwarranted by publishing economics. Now I hear that yours is a "subsidized" book. This, if true, explains all.

Except your silence about it. I think it is now incumbent upon you to make it clear either way, and not as a matter of opinion, that you do or do not have this kind of subsidy. I think you should also now make it clear and public that you did or did not have any assistance of any nature, any "research" or any direction or suggestions with your manuscript. But above all, now matter how indirect, do you or have you had any kind of assistance or underwriting of any nature.

Sincerely yours,
Harold Weisberg